It may perhaps be ascribed to the pre-eminence
accorded by the Khasis to the female sex that successive censuses have shown that the women of this race considerably exceed the men in number. According to the census of 1901, there are 1,118 females to every 1,000 male Khasis. This excess, however, is surpassed by that of the Lushais, 1,191 to 1,000, and it may possibly be due to the greater risks to life encountered by the men, who venture far into the plains as traders and porters, while the women stay at home. Habits of intemperance, which are confined to the male sex, may also explain a greater mortality among them.

It would be interesting to investigate the effect on reproduction of the system of matriarchy which governs Khasi family life. The increase of the race is very slow. In the census of 1891 there were enumerated only 117 children under 5 to every hundred married women between 15 and 40, and in 1901 this number fell to 108. It has been suggested that the independence of the wife, and the facilities which exist for divorce, lead to restrictions upon child-bearing, and thus keep the population stationary. The question might with advantage be examined at the census of 1911.

The next characteristic of the Khasis which marks them out for special notice is their method of divination for ascertaining the causes of misfortune and the remedies to be applied. All forms of animistic religion make it their chief business to avert the wrath of the gods, to which calamities of all kinds—sickness, storm, murrain, loss of harvest—are ascribed, by some kind of propitiation; and in this the Khasis are not singular. But it is somewhat surprising to find among them the identical method of *extispicium* which was in use among the Romans, as well as an analogous development in the shape of egg-breaking, fully described by Major Gurdon (p. 221), which seems to have been known to

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

787 diviners in ancient Hellas.* This method has (with
171 much else in Khasi practice) been adopted by the former subjects of the Khasis, the Mikirs; but it does not appear to be prevalent among any other of the animistic tribes within the boundaries of India.

211 The third remarkable feature of Khasi usage is the
171 custom, which prevails to this day, of setting up great
731 memorials of rough stone, of the same style and character as the *menhirs* and *cromlechs* which are found in Western Europe, Northern Africa, and Western Asia. It is very surprising to a visitor, unprepared for the sight by previous information, to find himself on arrival at the plateau in the midst of great groups of standing and table stones exactly like those he may have seen in Brittany, the Channel Islands, the south of England, or the Western Isles. Unfortunately the great earthquake of June 1897 overthrew many of the finest of these megalithic monuments; but several still remain, and of these Major Gurdon has given an excellent description (pp. 144 sqq.), with an explanation of the different forms which they assume and the objects with which they are erected. Other races in India besides the Khasis set up stone memorials; but none, perhaps, to the same extent or with the same systematic purpose and arrangement.

114 In conclusion, I have only to commend this work to the consideration of all interested in the accurate and detailed description of primitive custom. I lived myself for many years among the Khasis, and endeavoured to find out what I could about them; but much of what Major Gurdon records is new to me, though the book generally agrees with what I was able

* Called φοσκοπία: one of the lost books of the Orphic cycle was entitled τὰ φοσκοπικά.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

There are also syntactical agreements. We may take it as finally proved by Dr. Grierson and Professor Kuhn that the Mon-Khmêr, Palaung, Wa, and Khasi languages are closely connected. In the section of the Monograph which deals with language some striking similarities between the languages of these tribes will be pointed out. We have not so far been able to discover social customs common to the Palaungs and the Khasis; this is probably due to the conversion of the Palaungs to Buddhism, the change in the religion of the people having possibly caused the abandonment of the primitive customs of the tribe. In a few years' time, if the progressive rate of conversions of Khasis to Christianity continues, probably the greater number of the Khasi social customs will have disappeared and others will have taken their place, so that it cannot be argued that because no manifest social customs can now be found common to the Khasis and the Palaungs, there is no connection between these two tribes. The strong linguistic affinity between these two peoples and the wild *Was* of Burma points to an intimate connection between all three in the past. As knowledge of the habits of the wild *Was* improves, it is quite possible that social customs of this tribe may be found to be held in common with the Khasis. With regard to social affinities it will be interesting to note the Palaung folk-tale of the origin of their Sawbwa, which is reproduced in Sir George Scott's Upper Burma Gazetteer. The Sawbwa, it is related, is descended from the Naga Princess Thusandi who lived in the *Nat* tank on the Mongok hills and who laid three eggs, from one of which was born the ancestor of the Palaung Sawbwa. Here we see how the Palaung regards the egg, and it is noteworthy that the Khasis lay great stress on its potency in divination for the purposes of religious sacrifices, and that at death it is placed on the stomach of the deceased and is afterwards broken at the funeral pyre. Amongst some of the tribes of the Malay Archipelago also the *Gaji-Guru* or medicine-man "can see from the yolk of an egg, broken whilst sacramentally counting from one to seven, from what illness a man is suffering and what has caused it." Here we have an almost exactly parallel case to the Khasi custom of egg-breaking.

In the Palaung folk-tale above referred to the importance of

shield of Cherrapunji is used as a protection from rain. 293
Those of Maharam and Mawiang are each of a peculiar pattern. 352
Smaller shields are used as protections from the sun or merely for show, and there are specially small sizes for children. Then there are the different kinds of basket (*ki* 415
khoh) which are carried on the back, slung across the forehead 482
by a cane head-strap. These, again, are of different sizes. They are, however, always of the same conical shape, being round and broad-mouthed at the top and gradually tapering to a point at the bottom. A bamboo cover is used to protect the contents of the basket from rain. There is a special kind of basket made of cane or bamboo with a cover, which is used for carrying articles on a journey. These baskets, again, are of different sizes, the largest and best that the writer has seen being manufactured at Rambrai, in the south-western portion of the hills. 412
Paddy is husked in a wooden mortar by means of a heavy 415
wooden pestle. These are to be seen all over the hills. The 256
work of husking paddy is performed by the women. A bamboo sieve is sometimes used for sifting the husked rice, a winnowing fan being applied to separate the husk. The cleaned rice is exposed to the sun in a bamboo tray. Paddy is stored in a separate store-house in large circular bamboo receptacles. These hold sometimes as much as 30 maunds* of 415
grain. Large baskets are also used for keeping paddy in. In 825
every Khasi house is to be found the net bag which is made 436
out of pineapple fibre, or of *u stein*, the Assamese *riha* (Boehmeria nivea). These bags are of two sizes, the larger one for keeping cowries in, the cowrie in former days having been used instead of current coin in these hills, the smaller for the ever necessary betel-nut. *Pán* leaves are kept in a bamboo tube, and tobacco leaves in a smaller one. Lime, for eating with betel-nut, is kept in a metal box, sometimes of silver, which is made in two separate parts held together by a chain. The box is called *ka shanam*, and 415
is used all over the hills. This box is also used for 787
divination purposes, one end of it being held in the hand, and the other, by means of the chain, being allowed to swing

804

* The maund is 82 lbs.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

like a pendulum. An explanation of this method of divination will be found in the paragraph dealing with divination.

There is also a pair of squeezers used by the old and toothless for breaking up betel-nut. In the houses of the well-to-do is to be seen the ordinary hubble-bubble of India. Outside the houses of cultivators are wooden troughs hollowed out of the trunks of trees, which are used either as drinking troughs for cattle or for feeding pigs. A special set of utensils is used for manufacturing liquor. The Syntæng and Wár articles of furniture and utensils are the same as those of the Khasis, with different names, a remark which applies also to those of the Bhois and Lyngams. Both the latter, however, use leaves as plates, the Bhoi using the wild plantain and the Lyngam a large leaf called *ka 'la mariong*. The leaves are thrown away after eating, fresh leaves being gathered for each meal. The Lyngams use a quilt (*ka syllar*) made out of the bark of a tree of the same name as a bed covering. This tree is perhaps the same as the Garo *simpak*. In the Bhoi and Lyngam houses the swinging shelf for keeping firewood is not to be seen, nor is the latter to be found amongst the sub-montane Bodo tribes in Assam.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

The Khasis have not many musical instruments, and those that they possess, with one or two exceptions, are of very much the same description as those of the Assamese. There are several kinds of drums, viz. *ka nikra*, which is a large kettle-drum made of wood having the head covered with deer-skin; *ka kaing*, which is a cylindrically-shaped drum rather smaller than the Assamese *dhol* (*ka kaing kynthei* takes its name from the fact that this drum is beaten when women, *kynthei*, dance), *ka padiah*, a small drum with a handle made of wood; *kataas*, a small circular drum. Khasi drums are nearly always made of wood, not of metal, like the drums to be seen in the monasteries of Upper Assam, or of earthenware, as in Lower Assam.

Ka duitara is a guitar with *muga* silk strings, which is

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

about Rs. 30. The price of lac has risen a good deal of late years. Formerly the price was about Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 a maund. The lac trade in the Jaintia Hills and in the southern portion of the Khyrim State is a valuable one. The profits, however, go largely to middle-men, who in the Jaintia Hills are Syntengs from Jowai, who give out advances to the Bhoi cultivators on the condition that they will be repaid in lac. The Marwari merchants from the plains attend all the plains markets which are frequented by the hill-men, and buy up the lac and export it to Calcutta. The whole of the lac is of the kind known as stick lac.

HUNTING.

The weapons used by the Khasis for hunting are bows and arrows, the latter with barbed iron heads, and spears which are used both for casting and thrusting. Before proceeding on a hunting expedition the hunters break eggs, in order to ascertain whether they will be successful or not, and to which jungle they should proceed. Offerings are also made to certain village deities, e.g. *U. Ryngkew*, u *Basa*, and u *Basa ki mrád*. A lucky day having been selected and the deities propitiated, the hunters start with a number of dogs trained to the chase, the latter being held on leashes by a party of men called *ki nongsi-kaw*. When the dogs have picked up the scent some hunters are placed as "stops" (*ki khem*), at points of vantage in the jungle, and the drive commences with loud shouts from the hunters, the same being continued until the object of the chase breaks into the open. The man who draws the first blood is called u *nongsiat*, and the second man who scores a hit u *nongkan*. These two men get larger shares of the flesh than the others. The *nongsiat* obtains the lower half of the body of the animal, thighs and feet excepted, called *ka thong*, and the *nongkan* one of the forequarters called *ka tabla*. The other hunters obtain a string of flesh each, and each hound gets a string of flesh to itself. These hunting parties pursue deer sometimes for many miles, and are indefatigable in the chase, the latter lasting occasionally more than one day. In the Jaintia Hills, at the end of the chase, the quarry is carried to

certain dominant but non-priestly clans (*mantris*). In other States the Council has been widened by the addition to it of village headmen (*si-dars*), or the chief superintendents (*lasnas*) of the village markets, tolls from which constitute the chief item in the public receipts of these States. A further step towards the recognition of the public will in the nomination of a Siem has been the introduction of popular elections, at which all the adult males vote. Such popular elections were very greatly due to the views held by Colonel Bivar, who was Deputy-Commissioner of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills from 1865 to 1877. These elections have been, in many States, an innovation which is hardly in accord with public sentiment, and in many cases the voters have done no more than confirm the selection of a special electoral body. It is, however, clear that the idea of popular elections is not one with which the people are unfamiliar, e.g. in Langrin State, where all the adult males customarily vote at an election of a Siem. Popular election has also been customary in the Nobosohpoh and Bhowal States, in cases where a special electoral body has been unable to agree upon a nomination, and also in Nongspung, if a Council of five *lyngdohs*, which has in this State authority to declare who is the rightful heir, but not to disqualify him, cannot come to an unanimous decision. The Siems are appointed by an assembly, or *durbar*, which will be described later. The chiefs, having been thus chosen by the *durbar*, which is supposed by the people to be an institution of Divine origin, are styled, *ki Siem u Blei*, or Siems of God. In most States the Siem is the religious as well as the secular head, e.g. in the Chevra State, where the Siem is also *lyngdoh*. In Khyrim State the Siem has sacerdotal duties to perform at different religious ceremonies, especially at the time of the annual Nongkrem dance. It is the custom for the Siem to consult the auspices with the soothsayers for the good of the State. The Siem in matters judicial acts as a judge, the whole body of the *durbar* being the jury. In olden days the Siem marched to war at the head of his army. It is not customary to recognise an heir-apparent, and the young men of the Siem family pursue the ordinary avocations of a Khasi, not comporting themselves in the least like scions of royalty. In quite

Customs affecting the Siem — Analysis

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

insects, and to roam on this earth; but this idea of transmigration of souls has been probably borrowed from the Hindus. Bivar writes that although the ideas of a Godhead are not clearly grasped, yet a supreme creator is acknowledged, and that the following is the tradition relating to the creation of man. "God in the beginning having created man, placed him on the earth, but on returning to look at him, found he had been destroyed by the evil spirit. This happened a second time, whereupon the Deity created first a dog, then a man; and the dog, who kept watch, prevented the devil from destroying the man, and the work of the Deity was thus preserved." The Khasis, apparently, do not believe in punishment after death, at least, there is no idea of hell, although the spirits of those who have died under the ban of *saug* remain uneasy, being obliged to wander about the earth in different forms, as noted above. The spirits worshipped by the Khasis are many in number, those of the Syntengs being specially numerous. The particular spirit to be propitiated is ascertained by egg-breaking. The offering acceptable to the spirit is similarly ascertained and is then made. If the particular sacrifice does not produce the result desired, a fowl is sacrificed; the entrails being then examined, an augury is drawn, and the sacrifice begins afresh. As the process of egg-breaking is believed to be peculiar * to the Khasis amongst the Assam hill tribes, a separate description of it is given in the Appendix. It should be remarked that the Khasis never symbolize their gods by means of images, their worship being offered to the spirit only. The following are some of the principal spirits worshipped by the Khasis and Syntengs, omitting the spirits of deceased ancestors such as *Ka Iawebi*, *u Thawlang*, and *u Suidnia*, which will be described under the heading of ancestor-worship.

Ubi aulut—the god of the State, who is propitiated yearly by the sacrifice of a goat and a cock.

Ubi watong—the god of water, used for drinking and cooking purposes. This god is similarly propitiated once a year, so that the water supply may remain pure.

* Sir Charles Lyall has pointed out that the Mikirs possess this custom; it is probably borrowed from the Khasis.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

U lei longpoh—the god of wealth. This god is propitiated with a view to obtaining increased prosperity.

U Byngkew, or *u Basa shnong*, is the tutelary deity of the village. This godling is propitiated by sacrifices whenever they are thought to be necessary.

U Phen u kyrpad is a similar godling to the above.

Then follows a list of minor deities, or, rather, evil spirits, e.g. *Ka Rik*, the malarial fever devil; *ka Khlem*, the demon of cholera; *ka Duba*, the fever devil which is said to haunt the neighbourhood of Theriaghat.

Bivar says "the Khasi religion may be thus briefly defined as forms used to cure diseases and to avert misfortunes, by ascertaining the name of the demon, as the author of the evil, and the kind of sacrifice necessary to appease it." We may accept this description as substantially correct. In the Jaintia Hills, there is a peculiar superstition regarding a she devil, called "*ka Tarok*," which is supposed to cause delirium in cases of fever. When such cases occur, it is believed that "*ka Tarok*" has caused them, and inquiries are made by means of breaking eggs to find out in whose person the demon has obtained a lodgment; or sometimes the sick person is asked to reveal this. When in either of these ways the name of the person possessed by "*ka Tarok*" is known, the sick person is taken to the house of the possessed, and ashes and bits of broken pots are cast into the enclosure, after which, if the sick person recovers, the party indicated is denounced as possessed by the demon; but if the patient dies, it is concluded that the person possessed has not been properly ascertained. If people are satisfied that some one is really possessed, they denounce the person, who is then out-casted. The only way for him to regain his position is to exorcise the demon by divesting himself of all his property. He pulls down his house, burns the materials, his clothes, and all his other worldly goods. Lands, flocks, and herds are sold, the money realised by the sale being thrown away. No one dares touch this money, for fear he should become possessed by *ka Tarok*. It will be observed that, as in the case of the *thlen*, the demon is believed to follow the property.

Mr. Jenkins, in his interesting little work on "Life and

1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

'maw, short for *kiaw* (grandmother), and *ka*, mother. *Ka Iawbei* is the primeval ancestress of the clan. She is to the Khasis what the "tribal mother" was to old Celtic and Teutonic genealogists, and we have an interesting parallel to the reverence of the Khasis for *Ka Iawbei* in the Celtic goddess Brigit, the tribal mother of the Brigantes. Later on, like Ka Iawbei, she was canonized, and became St. Bridget.*

The greater number of the flat table-stones we see in front of the standing monoliths in these hills are erected in honour of *Ka Iawbei*. In former times, it was the custom to offer food to her on these stones. In cases of family quarrels, or dissensions amongst the members of the same clan, which it is desired to bring to a peaceful settlement, it is customary to perform a sacrifice to the first mother, "*Ka Iawbei*." They first of all take an augury by breaking eggs, and if it appears from the broken egg-shells that *Ka Iawbei* is offended, they offer to her a woven cloth, and sacrifice a hen. On these occasions incantations are muttered, and a small drum, called, "*Ka 'ding ding dong*," is beaten. It is not unlikely that the Khasi household deities, *Ka lei diep* and *Ka lawa la jingpan*, to whom pujas are offered for the welfare of the house, are also *Ka Iawbei* in disguise. Notwithstanding the strong influence of the matriarchate, we find that U Thawlang, the first father and the lawbei of *Ka Iawbei*, is also revered. To him on occasions of domestic trouble a cock is sacrificed, and a *jymphong*, or chocolate coat is offered. This puja is called *kata tay Thawlang*, i.e. covering the gratification. The following incantation to U Thawlang is then chanted:—"Oh, father Thawlang, who hast enabled me to be born, who hast given me my stature and my life, I have wronged thee, oh father, be not offended, for I have given thee a pledge and a sign, i.e. a red and white chocolate coat. Do not deliver me into the power of (the goddess of) illness, I have offered thee the propitiatory—oh that thou mayest carry me in thine arms, and that I may be aware of thee, my father Thawlang." We see clearly from the above prayer that the Khasi idea is that the spirit of the deceased male ancestor is capable of

* Kuit Pearson's essay on "matiaw age civilization."

1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

WORSHIP OF NATURAL POWERS AND OF DEITIES.

133 In the Khasi Hills, especially on the southern side, there are numerous rivers, sometimes of considerable size, which find their way to the Sylhet plains through very deep valleys, the rivers flowing through narrow channels flanked by lofty cliffs which rise to considerable altitudes. The scenery in the neighbourhood of these beautiful rivers is of the most romantic description, and the traveller might imagine himself in Switzerland were it not for the absence of the snowy ranges. Of such a description is the scenery on the banks of the river Kynshi-
823 yong, the *Lúbdkini* * or Pynsiit of the plains. It is in the bed
776 of the river, a few miles below Eilang, that there is the
782 curiously-carved cavity in the rock which resembles an upturned boat, which the Khasis call *Ka long bhi* (the god's boat) and the plains people Bonbanya's ship. Near to this, on the opposite side of the river, there is a rock bearing a Persian inscription, but so defaced by the action of the water as to be impossible to decipher. Like other inhabitants of mountainous countries, the Khasis reverence the spirits of hill and fall, and
224 propitiate them with offerings at stated times. A brief descrip-
782 tion of the ceremonies which are performed at Eilang, on the
776 occasion when the annual fishing in the river Pynsiit, takes
• 787 place, may be of interest. The three Siems of Nongstein, Langrin, and Nobosohpoh each sacrifice a goat to *Ka bhi* ere we (the goddess of the river) before the boatmen can cast in their nets. In former times they say the passage up the river was obstructed by the goddess, who took the form of an immense crocodile; but she was propitiated by the gift of a goat, and the boatmen were then allowed to pass up the river in their boats. Hence it became necessary for the owners of the fishery to sacrifice annually a goat each to the goddess. At the time of my visit each Siem's party erected an altar in the bed of the river, in the midst of which a length of the Khasi oak (*Quercus serrata*) was planted. The goats were then decapitated, it being considered an essential that the head

* Lit.: Cut by magic.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

should be severed with one blow. As soon as the head was cut off there was a rush on the part of the sacrificers to see in which direction the head faced. If the head faced towards the north or west, it was considered an evil omen; if it faced towards the south or east, a good omen. The east is a lucky quarter amongst the Assamese also. The people ended up the proceedings by giving a long-drawn-out, deep-toned chant, or *kyrkot*. Immediately after the ceremony was concluded hundreds of boats shot out from the numerous creeks, where they had been lying, and fished the river all night, the result being an immense haul, to the delight of the Lyngams, who were seen next morning roasting the fish whole on bamboo stakes, after which they consumed them, the entrails being eaten with great gusto. Such is the worship of the goddess of the Punatit.

Similar pujas take place among the people of Wár-ding (the valley of fire) before they fish in the Khai-mara river and elsewhere in the Khasi Hills. In the Jaintia Hills there is the Syntang-worship of the Kopili river, which used to be accompanied by human sacrifices, as has been mentioned above, pp. 102-104. The Myntang river, a tributary of the Kopili, must also be annually appeased by the sacrifice of a he-goat. Numerous hills also are worshipped, or rather the spirits which are said to inhabit them. One of the best known hill godlings is the deity who is thought to inhabit the little wood close to the summit of the Shillong Peak. This deity is said to have been discovered by a man named "U Shillong," who gave his name to the Shillong Peak, and indirectly to our beautiful hill station. The Siems of Mylliem and Nongkrem reverence *U'lei Shillong*, and there are certain clans who perform periodical sacrifices to this god. Probably the origin of the superstitious reverence with which U'lei Shillong is held by the Siems of Nongkrem and Mylliem is that their fabled ancestress "Ka Pah Syntiew," of whom an account will be found in the folk-lore section, took her origin from a rock not far from the Shillong Peak in the Nongkrem direction.

Sohlong Hill, which is within full view of the Shillong Peak in an easterly direction, is also said to be the abode of a minor god who is periodically propitiated by the members of the Mawlieh clan of the Khyrim State with a he-goat and a cock.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi A

823 776 Apparently no special puja is performed to U Kyllang (the Kyllang Rock) nowadays.

782 The picturesque hill of Symper, which rises abruptly from the plain in the Siemship of Maharam, is visible for many miles. It is in shape not unlike the Kyllang. Symper is said to be the abode of a god called "U Symper." There is a folk-tale [773] that Kyllang and Symper fought a great battle, and that the numerous holes in the rocks at the base of the Symper hill are evidences of their strife. At the base of Symper there is a great cave, where many cattle find shelter in rainy weather. The people of Mawsynram propitiate the god of Symper in cases of sickness by sacrificing a he-goat or a bull. Symper, like *U'lei Shillong*, is one of the minor deities of the Khasis.

Close to Shangpung, in the Jaintia Hills, there is a small hill called "*u lum pyddiang khai lyngdoh*," where sacrifices are offered on an altar at seed time and when the corn comes into ear. This altar used to be overshadowed by a large oak tree. The tree is now dead.

823 776 The Wars of Nongjri worship "*u'lei lyngdoh*," the tutelary deity of the village, under the spreading roots of a large rubber tree which gives its name to this village Nongjri. This village worship is performed by a village priest (*lyngdoh*) at stated intervals, or whenever it is considered necessary. There are numerous other instances of hills and rivers being regarded as the abode of godlings, but those quoted above are sufficient for purposes of illustration.

RELIGIOUS RITES AND SACRIFICES, DIVINATION.

776 782 783 787 The Khasis, as has been explained already, worship numerous gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses are supposed to exercise good or evil influence over human beings according to whether they are propitiated with sacrifices or not. They are even supposed to possess the power of life and death over men and women, subject to the control of *u Blei Nongthaw*, God the Creator. Thus illness, for example, is thought to be caused by one or more of the spirits on account of some act or omission, and health can only be

l: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

restored by the due propitiation of the offended spirits. 776
In order to ascertain which is the offended spirit, a system 782
of divination by means of cowries, breaking eggs, or 753
examining the entrails of animals and birds, was instituted. 787
The Khasi method of obtaining auguries by examining the viscera of animals and birds may be compared with that of the Roman *haruspex*. Some description of these modes of divination has been given at the end of this chapter. The 771
Khasi religion has been described by Bivar as "demon worship, 773
or a jumble of enchantments muttered by priests who are 743
sorcerers." But even a religion which is thus unflatteringly 825
described is based on the cardinal doctrines of sin and sacrifice for sin. Tradition amongst the Khasis states that in the beginning (*mynsyngkong ka sngi*) there was no sin, heaven and earth were near each other, and man had direct intercourse with God. How man fell into sin is not stated, but it is certain that he did fall. Experts at "egg healing" never forget to repeat the formula "*ngan briéw ngan la pap*" (I man have sinned). The cock then appears as a mediator between God and man. The cock is styled "*u khún ka blei ubo kit ryndang ka shah ryndang na ka byrta jong ngan u briéw*," i.e. the son of god who lays down his neck (life) for me man. The use of the feminine *ka blei* is no doubt due to matriarchal influences. There is another prayer in which the Khasis say, "*ap jutang ne u blei iong ranghah ne u briéw*" (oh god do not forget the covenant, arise oh man). The idea is that man has fallen into sins of omission and commission (*ka pap, ka lait ka lei*) but that God is nevertheless expected to spare him, and to accept a substitute for him according to the covenant (*jutang*). By this covenant God is supposed to have accepted in exchange the cock as a substitute for man. How the cock came to occupy such an 771
important position, tradition is vague and self-conflicting. The 825
fact remains that the covenant of the cock is the foundation 771
of the Khasi religion. It is of interest to mention that amongst the Ahoms the tradition is that Khunlung and Khunlái brought down from heaven the *kái-chán-mung*,* a pair of heavenly fowls, and that to this day the sacrifice of the

* In Ahom *kái* = fowl, *chán* = beautiful, *mung* = country. Therefore *Kaichán-mung* = fowl of a beautiful country (heaven).

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR

fowl is considered by the Deodhais, or priest-soothsayers of the Ahoms, a most important feature of the ancient Ahom ritual. But amongst the Ahoms there is the difference that auguries are obtained, not from the entrails, but by examining the legs of the fowls. The Ahoms are Shans belonging to the Tai branch, another great division of the Indo-Chinese group of the human race.

The covenant of the cock as thus explained shows the importance of this sacrifice to the Khasis. The large intestine of a fowl has two pea-like protuberances, one close to the other. One is symbolically called *u blei* or god, and the other is styled *u briéw* or man, they are connected by a thin membrane. Directly the bird has been disembowelled the sacrificer throws a few grains of rice on the entrails and then watches their convulsive movements. If the portion of the entrail called *u blei* moves towards that portion which represents man, it is considered proof positive that the god has heard the prayer of the sacrificer, but if the movement proceeds in the opposite direction, then the reverse is the case and the omen is bad. If the entrails are full and healthy, having no spots (*bruit*), or blood marks (*thung*), and if the membrane between the two protuberances has not been fractured, these are favourable signs. If the intestines are empty, wrinkled, or spotted, and the membrane mentioned above is fractured, these are bad signs. Auguries also are drawn by examining the livers, the lungs and spleens and gall bladders of pigs, goats, and cattle. If the liver of a pig is healthy and without spot, the augury is good; if the reverse, it is bad. The spleen must not be unduly distended, otherwise the omen is unfavourable and the gall bladder must not be over full. Inventions to deduce omens from the appearance of the entrails are quoted on page 11 of Col. Rivett's Report. From the first invention quoted by him it appears that the method of drawing the augury from the fowl differs slightly in detail from that which has been described to me by certain Khasis, but both descriptions agree in the main, and the slight dissimilarity in detail may be due to the methods of obtaining auguries varying slightly in different localities. Divination by breaking eggs and by other means, although not strictly sacrifice with the Khasis, partakes

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

of the nature of a religious ceremony. Such divinations are of almost every-day occurrence in a Khasi house, and always precede sacrifices. The Khasis, moreover, do nothing of what they consider to be of even the least importance without breaking eggs. When a Khasi builds a new house, or before he proceeds on a journey, he always breaks eggs to see whether the building or the journey will be lucky or not. The description of egg-breaking given by Shadwell in his account of the Khasis is not altogether correct. A detailed description of this method of divination will be found in Appendix C. The description can be depended upon, as it is the result of my personal observations of egg-breaking on several occasions. A board of the shape shown in the diagram (Appendix C) is placed on the ground, the egg-breakers' position being that indicated in the diagram. After the egg has been smeared with red earth, it is thrown violently down and the contents and the fragments of egg-shell fall on the board. Auguries are drawn from the positions of the fragments of shell on the board, and from the fact of their lying with the inner sides facing upwards or downwards. Another method of egg-breaking is for the diviner to wrap up the egg in a plantain leaf with the point uppermost, or merely to hold the egg in his hand in this position without wrapping it up, and then to press another egg down upon it. If the end of the egg so pressed breaks at once, this is a good sign, but if it remains unbroken, the egg has a god in it, and the omen is bad.

A common method of divination is by means of the *shaosm*, or lime-case. The diviner holds the lime-case by the end of its chain, and addresses the god. He then asks the lime-case a question, and if it swings, this is supposed to be an answer in the affirmative; if it does not move, this is a negative reply. This seems to be a very simple trick, for the diviner can impart movement to the lime-case by means of the hand. A similar way of consulting the oracle is by the bow, which is held in the hand by the middle of the string. A simple method of divining is by means of cowries or grains of rice. The diviner plunges his hand into a bag or basket after asking the god a question. If the number of cowries or grains of rice comes out odd, the omen is good; if it comes out even, the reverse is the

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

787 [791] case. The Khasi word for consulting the omens is *khan*, and a diviner is called a *nongkhan*. Another method of obtaining omens is by dropping two leaves into a pool of water or on a stone, the position of the leaves as they fall, either right side uppermost or upside down, signifying good or evil as the case may be; this is called *khan-sla*.

PRIESTHOOD.

793 104 The Khasi priest is usually called *Lyngdoh*, or *langdoh*; he is always appointed from the lyngdoh clan. The etymology of the word *lyngdoh* is said by certain lyngdohs of the Khyrim State to be *lang* = together and *doh* = flesh. A *lyngdoh*, or *langdoh*, is one who collects sacrificial victims, i.e. flesh for the purpose of sacrificing. It must be confessed, however, that this definition is doubtful, owing to the absence in the word *lyngdoh* of the prefix *nong* which is the sign of the agent in Khasi. Besides *lyngdohs* there are persons called *suh-blei* or *suh-sla*, who may 793 also be said to be priests. The Khasis, unlike the Hindus, have [604] no *purohit* or priest to perform the family ceremonies. Such duties fall to the lot of the head of the family or clan, who 782 carries them out generally through the agency of the *kni*, or maternal uncle. Old Khasis are frequently well versed in the details of sacrifices, and in the art of obtaining auguries by examining the viscera of sacrificial victims. Apart from family and clan sacrifices, there are the sacrifices for the good of the State or community at large: it is these sacrifices that it is the duty of the *lyngdoh* to perform. He may be said to be the priest of the communal religion, although he has certain duties in connection with offences committed against the social law of marriage, and with regard to the casting out of evil spirits from houses which may be thought to be infested with them. The lyngdohs of the Khasis may be likened to the Roman *pontifices*. 793 In the different Khasi States there is, as a rule, more 631 than one *lyngdoh*; sometimes there is quite a number of such priests, as in Nongkrem where there is a *lyngdoh* for each *raj* 793 or division of the state. There are a few Khasi States where 643 the priest altogether takes the place of the Siem, and rules the community with the help of his elders in addition to perform-

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

[582] 584 *Preliminaries.*—A young man of marriageable age, say between seventeen or eighteen years of age and twenty-five, fixes upon a girl of, say between thirteen and eighteen years, as likely to become a fitting partner; probably he has been acquainted with the young woman for some time before, and is on more or less easy terms of intimacy with her. He mentions the name of the girl to his parents, and uncles and aunts in the house, and they agree or disagree, as the case may be. Sometimes marriages are arranged by the parents of the young people themselves. Having agreed regarding the fitness of the bride, the young man's parents send a male representative of the family, or in some cases a man unconnected with the family, to arrange matters with the parents of the bride. The latter then ascertain their daughter's wishes. According to the late U Jeelen Roy, the daughters nearly always agree, it is very seldom that it is necessary to bring any pressure to bear. The parents then investigate whether there is any *sang*, or taboo, such as clan relationship, between the young woman and her intended, in the way of the marriage. If there is found to be no such hindrance, they fix a date for finally arranging the marriage (*law ia kut ktien*.) On the day appointed the bride's family consult the auspices by breaking eggs and examining fowls' entrails. If the omens are favourable, well and good. Should they be unfavourable, they abandon the marriage project. There is a strong prejudice against a marriage taking place under unfavourable auspices, the belief being that such an union will be childless, that the bride will die an untimely death, or that poverty will ensue. Given favourable auspices, the parents fix a day for the marriage. It was formerly the custom for the bridegroom to provide himself beforehand with a ring, usually of silver, but, amongst the rich, of gold, which is called *ka synjat* (hence the name of the marriage ceremony *pyniar-synjat*), and for the bride to provide herself with a similar ring. The bridegroom used to place his ring upon the bride's finger, and the bride used to place her ring upon the bridegroom's finger; it is however believed that this custom is rare nowadays. On the marriage day a man is selected from the party of the bridegroom called *u briang*, or go-between. The bridegroom then sets out with

1:Gurion E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

of a Gao marriage. The Lyngams, unlike the Garos, do not observewhich way the beaks of the fowls turn when they are thrown on the ground after being sacrificed. The Lyngams, like the Khasis, take auguries from the entrails of the fowls and the pig. After these ceremonies are over, the Lyngam pair are allowed to cohabit. The cost of an ordinary Lyngam marriage is from Rs. 30 to Rs. 40. The marriage system in vogue among the Lyngams may be described as a mixture of the Khasi and Garo customs. As has already been stated, the Lyngams are a mongrel breed of Khasis and Garos.

CEREMONIES ATTENDING DEATH.

The death customs of the Khasis are not only very elaborate, but possess a significance of their own, it is, therefore, necessary to describe them in detail; they are as follows:—

A member of the family bends down towards the ear of the apparently deceased person and calls him or her by name three times, to make sure that death has occurred. If no answer comes, the family laments, for it is then concludedthat the person is really dead. The body is then bathed in warm water from three earthen pots and is reverently laid on a mat (*jympung*), where it is dressed in white cloth, a peculiar feature of the dressing being that the waist-cloth and turbanare folded from left to right, and not from right to left, as in the case of the living. An egg called *u'leng kpuh* is placed on the stomach of the deceased, and nine fried grains, of *rin kadem*, or Indian corn, are tied round the head with a string. The rich place ear-rings in the ears and other jewellery on the body of the deceased, it being necessary that this jewellery should be specially made for the occasion, and they deck the corpse with valuable cloths. A cock, *u'kor kynd kpati* (literaly the cock that scratches the way), is sacrificed, the idea being that a cock will scratch a path for the spirit to the next world. A sacrifice of a bull, or of a cow in case the deceased is a woman, (*u or ka sosi pynsaw*,) follows. Portions of the left leg of the fowl and the lower part of the jaw of the bull or cow are kept, to be placed afterwards in the *mawshieng*, or bone,

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

If any stream has to be crossed, a rough bridge is made of branches and grass. This trail of leaves and the bridges are intended to guide the spirit of the deceased to the cairn. The person who carries the bones is not allowed to turn round, or to the right, or to the left, but must proceed straight to the cairn. On reaching it, a *nongkaia*, or sacrificer, washes the bones three times and then places them in an earthen pot, tying up the mouth with a white cloth. Then, having taken three pieces of the hard yolk of an egg, three loaves of bread, the leg of the fowl, "*u'iar krad lyuti*," and the lower jaw-bones of the animals which have been sacrificed, he places them inside the cairn and shuts the door. Eatables and betel-nut are then placed on the top of the cairn. Early next morning the relatives and friends go to the cairn with fresh food and water, and look about for new foot-prints, the idea being that from these foot-prints they can foretell future events. This they do until the third night after the cremation. During these three nights the front door of the house formerly occupied by the deceased is never closed, it being thought that the spirit may wish to return and visit its earthly abode. The whole family is moreover *sang*, or taboo, during this period, and no manner of work can be done. When the three nights are over, it is called the *lait ia*, i.e. the days (of mourning) are passed, and three eggs are broken to ascertain what was the cause of the death. After this the family goes to bathe, and the clothes and mats in the house are washed. When this has been done, the taboo is removed and the family can go to work. After a month a pig or a fowl is sacrificed, the ceremony being called "*ai bam lait kaai*." It will be observed that *three* seems to be the lucky number throughout these funeral ceremonies. The number seems to bear a similar significance in other matters of Khasi ritual, e.g. the pouring out of libations, which is always done three times.

It is *sang* or taboo for a Khasi widow to re-marry within one year from the death of her husband, there is a similar prohibition for a husband re-marrying; but such *sang* can be got over by the payment of a fine to the clan of the deceased. After the expiration of one year the fine is reduced in amount. Khasi widows do not as a rule re-marry, according to U Jaelom Roy,

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

587 unless they have no female children, in which case the clan
428 urges them to re-marry, so that the chain of inheritance may not be broken, inheritance amongst the Khasis always passing in the female line.

CUSTOMS IN CONNECTION WITH DEATHS BY VIOLENCE OR ACCIDENT.

766 These customs are interesting enough to deserve a separate
782 description; they are as follows:—

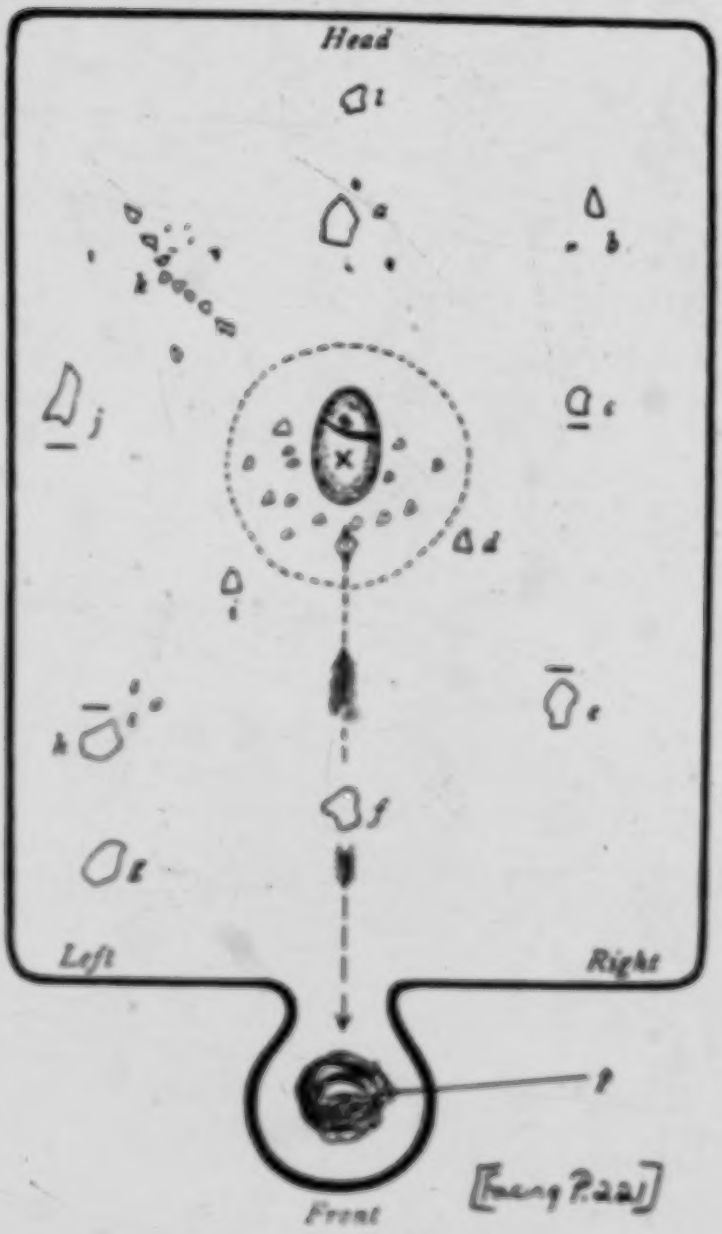
776 If a man dies by the sword, before his body can be burnt, a sacrifice of a black hen must be offered to *Ka Tyrwi*, the goddess of death. The bones are then placed in a stone cairn. Again they are removed, and, after eggs have been broken, are taken to a river bank and there washed. If there is no river at hand, a tank is dug for the purpose, which is called *umkoi*. There are various such *umkois* in different parts of the district, e.g. near Raliang and Nartiang. A sacrifice of a goat is offered to the god *U Synghai Bamon*, and a sow to *Ka Ramshandi*, both of whom are evil deities. Another sow is sacrificed to *Ka Tyrwi*. After this the bones are placed in another newly-built cairn. The ceremony of placing the bones in one and
[787] then removing them to another cairn is usually performed three times; but unless the auspices, as deduced from the eggs, are favourable, the relatives must go on sacrificing and removing the bones until they are so. These ceremonies having been completed, they erect a flat table-stone, or *mawlynthei*, for the ghost of the departed to sit upon, and return home, where they propitiate their ancestors with offerings of food. In the case of the murdered victims of the *thlen* superstition the same ceremonies are observed. For people who have died by drowning, or been killed by wild animals, and for women who have died in child-birth, similar pujas are
766 offered, except that a sacrifice to *U Synghai Bamon* does not
782 take place. In the case of one who has died at a distance from his house, e.g. in a foreign country, whose body has not been burnt in accordance with custom, and whose bones have not been collected, the members of his clan, or his children, take three or five seeds or cowries (*shai*) to a place where three roads meet. Here they summon the spirit of the departed in a loud voice,

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

APPENDIX C.

DIAGRAM OF EGG BREAKING BOARD.

787



* POSITION OF EGG BREAKER.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

P.221

APPENDIX C.

DIVINATION BY EGG-BREAKING.

THE *dieng shat pylleng*, or egg-breaking board, is shaped as 787 indicated in the diagram. Having placed a little heap of red earth on the board at point *p*, the egg-breaker sits facing the board in the position shown in the diagram. He first of all makes a little heap of rice in the middle of the board sufficient to support the egg. He places the egg there. He then takes it up and smears it with red earth, muttering incantations the while. Having finished the invocation to the spirits, the egg-breaker sweeps the grains of rice off the board, stands up, and dashes the egg on the board with considerable force. The large portion of the egg-shell is made to fall in the middle of the board, as at X in the diagram. This portion of the shell is called *ka lieng*, or the boat. The small bits of egg-shell which fall around the boat are either good or evil prognostics, according to the following rules:—

1. The bits of shell which fall on the right of the boat are called *ki jinglar*, and those on the left *ki jinglem*. Supposing fragments of shell fall as at *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, with their insides downwards, this is a good sign, but if one of the fragments lies with its outside downwards, this is a bad omen, and signifies *ka sray long kha*, or sin on the father's or the children's part. It may also signify *ka daw lum*, or "cause from the hill," i.e. that the illness or other affliction has been caused by a god of some hill.

2. If the fragments of shell lie on the left side of the boat as at *g*, *h*, *i*, *j* in the diagram, they are named *ki jinglem*. If they lie with their insides downwards, they indicate a favourable sign. If *g* lies with its outside downwards, this is an evil omen. If *g* and *h* lie with their insides downwards, this is favourable,

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

787 even if *i* lies with its outside downwards. If, however, *j* lies with its outside downwards, this is not a good sign.

3. If there are a number of pieces of egg-shell lying in a line, as at *k*, this is an evil prognostic, the line of shell fragments indicating the road to the funeral pyre. Such a line of shell fragments is called *ki'leng rah hang*. This sign is a harbinger of death.

4. If all the fragments of shell on both sides of the board, excepting the boat, lie with their insides downwards, the question asked by the egg-breaker is not answered. If *a* or *l* fall with their outsides downwards, this is a bad sign.

5. If the portion of a shell at *f* falls with the outside downwards, this indicates that some god needs appeasing by sacrifice.

6. If there are a number of small fragments lying around the boat, as in the diagram, these mean that there are many reasons for the illness, which cannot be ascertained.

7. If the portion of shell marked *s* is detached from the boat, this indicates that the goddess is very angry.

8. If four fragments lie around the boat so as to form a square, as *e*, *e*, *h*, *j*, these mean that the patient is at the point of death. These are called *ki leng sher thang*.

9. If there are no fragments, as at *d*, *e*, *f*, *g*, *h*, *i*, it is a puzzle. *ka leng kynstip*.

[105] *Note.*—The above information was obtained from U Sarup Singh, of Mairong; U Thum of Laitlyngkot, and U Dud, of Jowai. Different egg-breakers have somewhat different methods of reading the signs, but the main points are usually the same.

782 must be appeased by throwing eggs. If the desired
[781] effect does not occur after the sacrifice has been offered, further information is sought by observing intestines (sacrifice of rooster), and the sacrifice is offered again. At least that is what is done for sickness. The other sacrifices will be described in more detail later.

771 114 The religion of the Khasi is one that arises from fear of misfortune and harm, and is active in the worship of (evil) spirits through sacrifice. This definition of mine corresponds essentially with the definitions of Bivar, (3) who

[113] 3. Bivar, Administration Report on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District of 1876.

says: "The Khasi religion may be briefly defined as a form to cure illnesses and to ward off misfortune, by finding out [410] the name of the devil who is the original cause of the evil and to appease him by sacrifices which are necessary," and Gurdon (4) "calls the Khasi religion a cult

[113] 4. Gurdon, The Khasi (London, 1907) p. 105.

of spirits, i.e., actually rather a reconciliation of spirits, good as well as bad, by sacrifices, which are offered occasionally, especially in times of distress."

Table of Summary

776 of several gods (good and evil) who are revered by the Khasi and the Synteng.

1. Good Gods:

u blei nongthaw, the creator god,
u 'lei longspah, the (good) god of wealth,

787
483
342 hates stone; he does not wish any lime." (14)

14. P.A. Münsloher, S.D.S. Die apostolische Präfektur Assan [The Apostolic Prefecture of Assam] (Rome, 1899), p. 83.

4. Egg Throwing (shat-pylleng)

787
782 The most common of all the oracles of the Khasi is egg throwing (shat-pylleng). A great deal has already been written about it. (15)

[113]

15. P. Dr. C. Becker, Das Eierwerfen der Khasi [Egg Throwing Among the Khasi] Anthropos XII-XIII (1917-1918), pp. 494-496.

I will only add here the prayer of the sacrificer u nongshat-pylleng. It is not an actual prayer, at least the nongshat-pylleng is not bound to any formula. The sacrificer speaks approximately thus:

Ko lengsan khun ka blei, ko banang ko batip ko ba lah ko baiai, nga pynthiah nga pyndem halor ka diengshat ka diengkhein, ka duwan ka dupat, a kynrad ngan kylli ngan

O thou egg of the oracle, thou daughter of the goddess, thou whom thou knowest and art aware of (art able to) thou remainest thou (stayest); I put thee down here on the board (16)

16. Cf. Table II, Picture 1. [114]

togkit katne ba long shiton ka lanot ka shoh ka ther ka shit ka yang ka piss ka lynga ia ka met u

on the oracular wood, on the altar, o mistress, I question and ponder (would like to question,

●787 Donsing hato nangno ka
782 daw ba long katne don
hi na kpoh la iing mo?
Kaba wan thaw katne?

wish to question), for great are the troubles and the afflictions, the oppressions and the cares, the heat and the fire (of the fever), the disquietude and the depression of N.N. What is the reason that he is so badly off? Does the cause lie in the family itself perhaps (na khpoh, i.e., in the stomach, in the insides)? Has that perhaps done all this?

Lada don ka jot
ka rem ka bijar ka
bukkhoh ha ka blei
ka Iasbei, ha u phan u
kyrpad ngan sa jied
ngan sa pynshai ia ka
khmat ka long jot ka
long rem ka bijar ka
bukkhoh, don?

If perhaps a sin, a guilt, a vexation, or any annoyance exists for the goddess Jaubei or Phan u kyrpad, so will I ponder and illuminate the eye (of understanding) the corruption and the guilt, the annoyance and the vexation, which, may it be?

Jem ka mon bin
kynrong ka diang joit
buh ka jingkem arsnep
slait, da weng ka lar
ka sap ka bûhsang ka
tharai ong en me ym don
na kpoh la iing ka ban

My will is soft as jelly and very tiny Cross the left over the right quickly! Line up the two egg shells (slait, i.e., without any room in

●787 wan thaw kum kata, khat
782 ei na wei du kaba wan
shoh ther katne.

between), take away the white (egg white), the sacrilegious thing, (not permitted thing) and the uncertain thing! Say: no! thou! It does not come from the family that which has caused all this. Therefore it comes from outside (from somewhere else), that which strikes him and rattles down so on him.

Lar ha ka dong
ngang, kiew ha ka dong
roit, noh ka diang
khyllon ka diang da
buh lengsam shiliang
kadiang!

May the white come to the outermost corner and may it climb into the corner, down with the left! May the left close together (may the left sink powerlessly together). Place the oracle over to the left, to the half!

Mynno nga byn-
thiew mynno nga
kyrshah mynno nga
sin mynno nga rngop
nga pynsum dewlieh
dewtem dewsni dewsnah
dewraij dewkynton ba
ngan iit ia ka liem
ia ka dem ka pyllup
ka lyndang, no.

When have I then spit out? When have I cleared my throat of the thick phlegm? When have I [420] given a nickname? When have I washed and bathed the white earth (clay, loam), white loam, yellow loam, sticky loam, heaped up loam? So that I may

●787
782

recognize that which lies towards the top and towards the bottom, that which lies on the back and on the stomach, is it not so?

Mynno nga rah
mynno nga rong kum
ka khlieng ka tyngab,
ka ims ka doh.

When have I carried anything away, When have I dragged something off, such as the hawk or the raven or any kind of bird or meat?

Hu mo 'lengsam!

Hurrah! is it not so, thou egg of the oracle!

5. The Sacrifice of the Rooster (jingknia syiar)

Just as by egg throwing so by the sacrifice of the rooster the Khasi wish to find out the reasons that are causing illness or some other misfortune. This sacrifice of a rooster is almost as common as throwing eggs. It is especially performed when a serious case must be settled. Since the rooster is more expensive than an egg, they expect to get the desired results more readily through the sacrifice of the rooster. In general the rite is the same as described in the Nongkrem-Puja in the Khasi mountains. (17) An example of the "invocations"

17.P. Dr. C. Becker, Anthropos, IV (1909), p. 899.

follows here, which the sacrificer pronounces with the following words:

787
782 Te ko rangiarkhad, ko khun ka blei, ko rangkynjih ko rangkyn jai, ko rangkynih ko rangphawar ko ba ioh ka hukum ka kular na myndang long ka pyrthei, shai ka pyrthei na khmat ka blei ktien ka blei, te ha angew nga kylli nga tohkit ha shat ha ka khan, nangno ka daw ba wan shoh wan ther katne ia ka met u Donsing?

And now, thou sacrificial rooster, thou son of the goddess, thou hopper and jumper, thou crower, thou wise-speaker (who understands how to speak in figures of speech), thou who hast received the law and the promise from the beginning of the world, Bright is the world from the face of the goddess, from the word of the goddess! So listen now, I ask, I ponder, I cast oracles, I question oracles: whence is the reason (what is the reason), that strikes U. S. and rattles down so on his body?

Ong phi ka blei manga, ka shoh te manga ka ther te manga ka sympat ka kawiat te manga, te nga shang darum-darum daneng-danang na kylli nangno ka long-jot ka long-rem, nangno ka bijar ka buhkhoh phi ka blei!

Say, o goddess: It is I who strikes him, it is I who rattles down on him, and I who scourges (421) and lashes him. And and up and down and ask, whence comes then the destruction, the incrimination, whence then the vexation and annoyance, o thou goddess!

•787
782 Ong phi ka blei,
ko khun ka lawlar
synkato me ka sngi
me lapan ia ka dur ka
long briew ka long ling
na khmat nga ka blei
ka laubet nga ong

So say, o goddess,
thou daughter of lies,
at that time, is it
not so, (18) on that

18. The following words are, as it were, as if the sacrificial rooster were putting them in the mouth of the goddess and were contradicting the oracle.

day thou best demanded the picture of the man, the value of the family before my face, before me, the goddess, before me the laubei, so I sngi

Stand up and recall! Draw forth the promise from that sngi And when thou standest there and bowest down and showest reverence, then the thanks and the reverence, then the

Khie synnam
sieh ka jutang na kata
ka lyoti, yuda me long
ka ngub ka dem u ah-
hot u lanjew u kpu u
rymai ia ka jong ka
longsynah kot ia katei
ka dur ka long briew
ba me la sieh ka jutang

and the cake, to
thine own well-being
and wealth, as to
that picture of the
coming into existence
of man which thou hast
produced through the

• 727

Khem dun ka Lathe-
Rathana ka khast nga
ka blei ne tep ne
lgnde pyuhan, nangta
jot nga ka blei ka
Laubeli

promise on that day.

Hast t.ou no tale
of this before my, the
goddess! before my
face! Thou buryest,
thou concealest it
rather, and therefore
the disaster, say I,
the goddess, the Laubeli

In u sytar u shan
pe nangta la ka sang
ka ma te nangta, la
ka tyrut ka omar te
nangta, loh ka shiton
ka lanot u tyuriew
te na kata ka lyuti.

Long live the
master, the support,
and further, long live
the taboo and the
threat, and again long
live the Tyrut and the
Omar and there man ex-
periences suffering and
sorrow, on every way
whither (from birth).

Thou, however, o
god and master, since
I have now come along
thy ground, the way
of destruction, of
guilt, so I raise my-
self up. The memory,
the perplexity because
of that way, wherever
I may dwell, shall
be the thanks, the re-

Ta ka blei trei
kynrad wei nga la lap
la kata ka kaie ka
lyuti ka long-jot ka
long-rem ka jing phi
te ngata ngan da lang
ka kynnum ka kyndit
nonur kata ka lyuti
kot haba shong ka
ngah ka dem u kpu u
synei u klaoh u
[illegible] ka kata ka lyuti.

the gourd and the
gourd bottle; peace-
ful and well-intent-
ed art thou, o god-
dess Laubei, on the
path.

● 367
362

Ia ea ioh ka
khiah ka nang, long
ranghah u kynriew jeit
suk ne u blei lyngngai
wang ka thoah ka tar ka
kjah ka star.

We receive the
sublime and the pos-
sible. Quickly rise
up, mani Well satis-
fied be thou, o god!
Take away the faults,
the stains, the band
and the sling.

Ong ya pat shong
ka dur da kumta khadei
dang kumwei du, kiew
da ka thoh da ka tar
da ka bruin da ka
briah da ka kjeh da ka
star, katta ne blei
long kynrad, kuri-ei
nga pyrsum nga pyrsaleh
nga pyntieng nga pyngung
ha ka umthawai umlyngiam,
ban kiew ka syrti ka
jumai ban un ka rymdeng
ha khmat ka duwan ka
dupat ban nang ka
sorbar ka sorbar mut

Say: the picture
does not yet appear
thus, rather different,
is it not so! Raise
thyself from the great
stains and from the
great faults and from
all the little stains
and spots, from sling
and band and thee, is
it not so, o god and
master, it is in
vain! I wash and
bathe and make pipes
of water and scooped-
out wells in the eddy
and in the depths, so
that ka syrtieh (19)

[376]

19. Ka syrtieh is a demoness, who
cuts and scratches and files and
saws, i.e., through inner pains.

[376]

20. Ka jumai is the demoness
earthquakes.

arise, so that
throat may dis
(bleed to dest
fore the viewe

• 767
782

Shan syiar, hei nga dkhat sohpet shynnai ban nang ka korbar ka sorbar, kane de ka deng de ka kup ka ryndia ka muka ka larong ka muna ho, jei dong tam dong lait ban lait ka jot ka rem no?

altar, so that the counsel be good, is it not so?

Thou blood of the rooster, hurrah! Look, I tear out its navel, the intestines, so that the counsel be good. This here is the jewelry, this the garment, this the silk, this the purse and the net, is it not so? Look, here is the tube for gathering, here the tube for escaping from destruction and guilt is it not so?

776
782

6. Discovering the Spirits that Need Appeasing (Kheinkseuid).

Khein kseuid means the seeking for or the discovering of the insult to the goddess which sells (die) man through suffering to the pain-causer (kseuid). The demon cannot harm man if the goddess does not stand for it and allow it. The guilt of man plays no part in this (in and of itself). The Khasi say that in their religion there is only one goddess, the "Giver of Orders" (ka ranghukum). She commands that a phan a syrpad (12) should be, that a suid-nia of Jaubei

Or she herself chooses a means, that to be "god." for example, so she he the goddess of wealth or the goddes curse. This goddess gives the comm sacrifices: That the piece (a dykh

c) Third Burial (maw bah)

764 The ceremonial transfer of the bones from the various maw phew into the common sib grave maw bah is probably the most important of all the ceremonies [137] which the Khasi have. For not merely the precise and orderly fulfillment of every prescribed ceremony and custom, even the smallest, is necessary here, but also an emotional or spiritual preparation is needed, which neither occurs nor is demanded among the Khasi for anything else. This emotional or spiritual preparation consists in the requirement that all members of a whole sib must live in peace with each other, since otherwise the ceremonial transfer of the bones may not take place.

[138] If all quarrels and discords are smoothed out, this is determined with the greatest exactitude, and a sacrificer who is taken from the sib inquires by egg throwing and the sacrifice of a chicken, which day would be suitable for the ceremonial act. If the day is determined in this way, all the relatives of the dead meet together in the house of the group mother (Stammutter) (iing sang): the children, the brothers and sisters, the nephews and nieces (shi kur shi para ryngkat u khun ka mainuh maiaan baruh), the great uncles and the little uncles (u sla-bah u slerit). Standing, they call upon the goddess who has created the members of the whole sib and say:

Kumai? bukum phi ka blei thaw kynrieu buh kynriew ha ngan [illegible] ka lum ka kyn [illegible] ha thep ka tlan [illegible] u suidiap u nongu lor u kap

How dost thou, o goddess, wish that I stand before thee, before thy face) to gather the hard earned, the stored up, the spirits of the dead,

Table II

787
782

The Egg Oracle

Sacrifice of a Chicken

784

[illegible] The Place of Cremation.

3:Stegmiller-1&-4,5(no date)1924 AR7KhasiAR7

Sacrifice and Sacrificial Customs of the Khasi by P.F. Stegmiller, S.D.S., Former Apostolic Missionary of Assam (India).

(With 6 Illustrations in the Text)

1. The Offerers of Sacrifices:

a) Lyngdoh,
b) Ceremonial introduction of the lyndoh.

2. The Sacrifices:

a) State Sacrifices,
b) Private Sacrifices,
c) Secret Sacrifices

1. The Offerers of Sacrifices.

a) Lyndoh.

The religion of the Khasi is an (evil) spirits worship, which has arisen out of fear of misfortune and harm and which is carried out by means of sacrifice. This definition of mine corresponds essentially with the definition of Rivar, (1) who says: "The Khasi religion may be briefly defined as a form to cure illnesses and to ward off misfortune by finding out the name of the devil, who is the original cause of the evil, and by appeasing him by the necessary, sacrifices. Gurdon (2) calls "the Khasi religion a cult of spirits, i.e., actually

1. Rivar, Administration Report of of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District of 1876.

2. Gurdon, The Khasi (London, 1906) p. 105.

772

Fig. 2 p. 11
[The state function of nitrogen]

• 779
782

Fig. 3 p. 13
[Cyl rotating plane]

3:Stegmiller-14 M-4,5(no date)1924 AR7 Khast AR7

787
782

Fig. 4 p. 15
[Egg throwing: Throwing of the egg]

Fig. 5 p. 15
[Egg Throwing: Investigation]

1. The Food Sacrifice.

782 An altar is necessary primarily for offering this sacrifice. This altar is made of earth and consists of a little heap of earth which has been dug out of the ground near where the sacrifice is to be offered by a ka wait (chopping knife).

The usual sacrificial gifts, ingredients, and sacrificial utensils are:

kpu: a kind of bread made of rice meal. The rice is first washed, dried, and then pounded into meal.

rynsi: a kind of bread shaped like a bullet of pounded rice meal or cornmeal mixed with sugar.

[illegible] u khau: uncooked, shelled rice.
u skau: a gourd bottle.
u kiad: rice brandy.
ka um : water.
kwai :betel nut.
tymgeu: a pepper leaf.
ela kait: a banana leaf.
ka ding sning: leaves of the Khasi oak (botanical name: Castanopsis sp.)
u luta: a silver water container.
ka pliang rupi: a silver plate like a dish.
ka pliang kyuthei: a rather large brass dish.

The sacrificing of the gifts consists in their being placed on the altar in certain forms or figures and being reddened with the blood of the animals (which will be sacrificed afterwards) or at least being sprinkled with water and rice brandy.

782 2. The Egg Sacrifice (Egg Throwing)
• 787

The egg sacrifice or egg throwing (shad pylleng) as it is usually called is the most

782 common of all. It is used on those occasions
787 when something must be asked about or investigated. The spirits are supposed to inform at the egg throwing where the most favorable place is for the building of the hearth (building the hut), from which forest the needed bamboo should be fetched for the construction of the hut, where the most productive huntings areas are, which is the most favorable day for setting out on a journey, in which week the cultivation of rice can begin, at which market the best sale may be expected, where a general archery contest can take place, for what reason somebody is sick, who has caused a difficult birth by a moral crime.

Lyngdohs are rarely called in for this sacrifice. For the Khasi are so familiar with egg throwing that probably most of the older men know how to do it. The process is also not too complicated, so that even a person with little practice can dare to try egg throwing. Only in very difficult cases, especially in cases of sickness, is a lyngdoh sought out to perform the sacrifice. Or also in cases in which the spirits do not wish to answer. (12)

12. P. Stegmiller, S.V.D., "Teufelsopfer" [Devil Sacrifice], Missionsverlag für Indien [Missionary Publishers for India], (1922: Vienna) p. 51.

The following objects are needed for the offering of the egg sacrifice.

1. A wooden platter which is rounded at the corners and has a handle. It is called ka dieng shad pyllaeng (the wood for egg throwing). The middle part is called ka lieng (the little saucer).

2. Red earth for making distinguishable the outer side of the egg shells.

772 3. Uncooked, husked rice which is placed
787 in several piles (or also only in one pile) on
the gaming board.

4. Last of all eggs, which one by one, after being strewn with rice (fig. 3), are rubbed with red earth, fondled, and called by flattering names and then thrown on the gaming board with great force (fig. 4). In this process the egg bursts and the white and the yolk splatter around, while the shells are scattered in all directions. So that the soft part in the egg will not obstruct the egg shells too much, the sacrificer speaks the following before he throws: "May the clear part come into the outermost corner! May it climb into the corner! Down with the left! May the left strike together!"

(773) The position of the egg shells provides the answer (fig. 5) and the various positions means approximately the following:

1. When the small pieces of shell lie with their insides down, on both sides of the board but not on the little saucer, then the question of the egg throwing is not answered. If this happens, the sacrificer asks beforehand at the throwing of the next egg with a sad voice: "Have I perhaps sinned? Have I washed and bathed the loam? the white loam? the yellow loam? the sticky loam? the piled up loam? Oh let me know what lies below and what lies above! Let me know that which is lying on the back and that which is lying on the stomach! Oh hear me, thou egg of the oracle!"

2. If a lot of little eggshells are lying around the saucer, that means that there are a lot of reasons (for example for the illness) which cannot be found out. In this case the sacrificer will express himself approximately thus with the next egg: "Oh egg of the oracle! Has a sin, has a crime been committed? Was the tutelary

772 spirit of our village insulted? I wish to con-
777 sider and to enlighten the eye of understanding as to what may well be the cause and the guilt of the sorrow and vexation! Look hither! Very tiny is my desire and soft as cotton my will! Thou shalt say! Thou shalt explain! Thou shalt help! Oh line up the bits of shell together! Make smaller the spaces in between! Cross the left over the right! Say: No! It does not come from the family, it comes from outside, that which carries the guilt for the misfortune!"

3. If a little piece of egg shell is lying with its outside facing down at the end of the little saucer in the middle of the board, that means that the goddess wishes a blood sacrifice.

4. If a little piece of egg shell is lying quite alone at the upper end of the saucer, that means that the divinity is very angry.

Thus the Khasi have determined the meaning of all possible positions of the eggshells, according to whether they are lying up or down, in the middle, or at the end, or the side of the saucer. It is the meaning which the divinity wishes to make by the position. It is obvious that sacrifices are made until a position is finally reached which presents the desired result. Thus it happens that 80, 100, and more eggs are used at a single sacrifice.

This method of throwing eggs is the most usual. But there is a still simpler way. The sacrificer wraps the egg in a leaf (ka la mat). He takes it in his left hand and strews it with grains of rice. Now he tries to press in the tip of the egg with the thumb of his right hand while uttering sayings and magic formulae. If this succeeds, it is a good sign, if not, it means the opposite. (13)

13. P. Dr. C. Becker, S.D.S. "Das

3:Stegmiller-26 M-4,5(no date)1924 AR7 Khasi AR7

782
• 787

Eierwerfen der Khasi" [Egg Throwing Among the Khasi], Anthropos, 1917, p. 496.

Only in cases of sickness does the sacrificer not take the usual gaming board. In its place he uses a rather large brass dish (ka pliang kynthei), on which he lays a lattice work made of thin bamboo sticks (igra). The broken egg runs through the lattice work into the dish and from the eggshells the sacrificer then predicts in the same way as described above, since he considers the narrow bamboo lattice work as the gaming board. (14)

14. P. Stegmiller, S.D.S., "Bei der Erkrankung eines Familienmitgliedes" [At the Illness of a Member of a Family], Anthropos, 1921-22, p. 426.

3. The Blood Sacrifice with Observation of the Entrails.

a) The Rooster Sacrifice (jingknia syiar).

If the desired result is not obtained by egg throwing, the sacrifice of the rooster usually follows. A rooster is dedicated to the godhead by strewing it with rice, kiad, kpu, and rynsi. The sacrificer now dips a sharp knife in the sacrificial water that is standing ready and then cuts through the rooster's throat. He lets the blood drip on the altar and on the sacrificial gifts. Now the observation of the entrails begins, which is not always the same but is described

772 as follows since this is the usual way. (15)
• 777

15. P. Dr. C. Becker, S.D.S., Anthropos Vol. 4 (1909), p. 899.

"The gullet of hens is formed like a fork about in the middle between the neck and the stomach. The right part of the prong is called u Blei (god), the left u briu (man). First the rectum is looked at to see if it is perhaps empty or has any symptoms of a disease or spots. In these cases, the little fowl is unsuitable for sacrifice. But even when everything is without fault, better indications are still wanted. The forking mentioned above is looked at and the sacrificer, holding the intestine in his hand, begins the ceremony with the question: "Nga kylli nga byrthem di ka shat khan, iang rangbah u briu, dam u Blei?" (I ask and seek by throwing and by oracles, does the man rise and the god bow?) While saying that he sprinkles the forking of the gullet with a little rice with the other hand, whereby because of the convulsive trembling one part or the other actually raises itself. If "the man" raises itself, that is a good sign, since the opposite forking, the "god" then bows or stays still as a sign of agreement."

The sacrificing lyngdoh calls upon the godhead and ends with the following words: "Hey, the blood of the rooster! Hurrah! Look there, I tear out its navel, its entrails, so that the advice maybe good. This here is the ornament, this the garment, this the silk, this the bag and the net, is it not so? See here the pipe of collecting, here the pipe of escaping from destruction and the guilt, is it not so?" (14)

14. P.F. Stegmiller, Anthropos, 1921-22, pp. 420 ff.

'182
• '189

b) The Goat Sacrifice (pom blang).

The head of the goat is cut off with one blow. Only parts of the insides of the animal (na ka kpoh) may be taken for the actual sacrifice. Either 5, 7, or 9 parts are taken. If 5 parts are taken, they are from the heart, kidneys, lungs, gall bladder, and liver. If 7 parts are taken, parts of the spleen and loin are added. If 9 parts, the pieces mentioned above and pieces from the small and large intestines. If the parts are good, then the sacrifice is also good, but if spots and speckles are present (da ka thoh da ka tar da ha brain da ka briah) the sacrifice must be repeated, as it is nullified. The rest of the ritual is like the one described for the first celebration of a lyngdoh.

In the case of pigs, it is only observed whether liver, lungs, spleen and gall bladder are healthy.

'192

c) Secret Sacrifices.

Although the sacrifices already described and their offerers are in general known, a whole net of tales is woven around the "secret sacrifice." The Khasi themselves [illegible] speak of them only with shyness and abhorrence. After all it concerns a human sacrifice which is offered the devil "u thlen." The fact is that these sacrifices were offered and are still offered. I myself knew two persons who fell as sacrifice to this revolting superstition between the years 1905-10.

In order to describe the secret sacrifices of the "human sacrifices" of the Khasi it is necessary:

1. to sketch the thlen tale,
2. to discuss the preparations for the

224 bears, leopards and tigers, which seize their
136 prey not merely among the goats and calves, but also among the grown cattle, and at times are even dangerous to man; although there are lots of tasty birds -- quails, partridges, lapwings, coots and wild geese -- in spite of all this the Khasi are not actually hunters. Only when an opportunity either presents itself to catch such birds, or when a wild animal has shown itself or even caused damage in the village, then the Khasi go hunting. Exceptions occur. The Khasi who use bows and arrows from childhood on, who practise shooting conscientiously, dare to hunt bears, leopards, and tigers. (33) Today they often have guns for this purpose, but bows and arrows are always taken along.

224 When a lucky day has been determined upon
• 787 by egg throwing, (33) and often the hunting area

33. Dr. P.G. Becker, "Das Eierwerfen der Khasi" [Egg Throwing Among the Khasi], Anthropos, 1917-1918, pp. 494 ff.

is often determined in this way, the Khasi set
224 out with a pack of hounds. As soon as the dogs have come upon the scent of the wild animal, the Khasi begin driving it with howlings and noise. The first shooter is lucky (called u nongsiet by the Khasi) because he gets the [illegible] of the prey. [illegible] one to hit the animal (called u nongben by the Khasi) also receives special consideration. The other shooters divide the rest of the slain animal among themselves after the hunting dogs have each been given a piece. The Khasi are very persevering on the hunt and do not bother about the time or the distance. For the efforts expended on the hunt are richly rewarded by the

The spectators now go to the side, the S'iem and the Ka'jaiñe come down to the place of sacrifice, while the Sub Blei receives the utensils and the sacrificial gifts and spreads them out in order on the ground. Then he takes the money in both hands and calls on the god Shillong with these words: "O god Shillong, thou who hast been seated since time immemorial! (Ne Blei Shillong kumba la bah u long dewai)" With a deep bow he then offers the sacrifice five times. Rooster and goat are sprinkled with water, rice, and the flour from kpu and rynti, and are then beheaded. Then the examination of the entrails (dyblon) takes place in order to see if the sacrifice was acceptable. The way of doing that will be given below.

After the end of the sacrifice the Sub Blei and a flute player lead the sword dance; after them the S'iem and the other dancers follow in turn. Various drums are beaten alternately and flutes are played through the whole night. When night falls the gnats of the S'iem and those of the various districts of the kingdom of Hongkrem are brought for the sacrifice of the next day.

The day following the great market is called ka sngi Lyngka. It is the center point and climax of the whole ceremony. From early in the morning the crowds pour in from all sides of the Khasi Mountains.

Early in the morning an unmarried girl of the royal lineage (ka S'iem ka dang khynraw) dances in the house of the S'iem síd before the sitdon Blei. Usually a granddaughter or nearest relative of the S'iem síd is chosen for this. Two men then take the girl in their arms and carry her with a rocking motion to the large open place in front of the síng síd.

Then the great folk dance begins. In the middle of the place musicians squat on the ground and play the drums and flutes, and strike the cymbals. The music is quite without art, only a repetition of the same [illegible]

The women dancers move in a rather narrow circle around the musicians. Only the unmarried girls dance. The clothes they wear for it are very rich and frequently very valuable. Fine cloths, usually of red, yellow, or blue silk are draped over their bodies; the upper body and arms are covered by a satin jacket. Their hair is bound together in a bun behind their heads; a string hangs /facing p. 896. Fig. 5/ Khasi Men Dancers in front of the síng síd. Phot. P. From. Siegmüller, S. D. S. Fig. 6. Sword Dance of the Khasi. Fig. 7. S'iem síd and S'iem of Hongkrem. / /897/ down from the bun which usually ends in three tassels. The head is covered by a golden or silver crown of fine chased work, which is topped by a bunch of feathers or a bunch of artificial flowers. Around their necks they wear chains of gold or

[illegible]

the right to kill two of them, since he sacrifices to the ka Blei long
S'lem and to the u Blei Shilliang at the same time.

Each one places the little liquor bottle on the little pile of earth in front of him. This also represents the altar. Then they take pepper leaves and oak leaves and place them in a certain pattern beside and on top of each other, pieces of betel nuts are placed on them, and the whole is strewn with rice, kpu flour and rymi flour, while short prayers are murmured (cf. Fig. 1). Then follows the sacrifice of the little hens. The sacrificers each take one between both hands, murmuring soft prayers, then /999/ the head of the little animal is sprinkled with water and strewn with rice, kpu flour, and rymi flour. Each one dips a kind of pocket knife in the water and then cuts through the throat of the chicken. The freshly flowing blood is allowed to drip on the altar -- the little pile of earth with the bottle of liquor and the leaves. Then the entrails are taken out of the animals in order to see whether god is favorable to them or is angry with them because of the sins and wickedness of men. The sacrificers hold them up high with their right hands and look at them carefully. A joyful "u bha! (it is good)" escapes their lips and spreads through the circle of spectators.

This observing of entrails (hythot) occurs at all the sacrifices. Although there are many kinds of such augaries, the following are more or less the usual ones. The gullet of chicken is about in the middle between the neck and the stomach and shaped like a fork. The right prong is called u Blei (god), the left one u briu (man). First the stomach is looked at to see if it is empty or shows any symptoms of sickness or spots, in these cases the hen is not suitable for sacrifice, but even when everything is faultless, better signs are wanted. The forking mentioned above is looked at and the sacrificer, holding the intestines in his hand, begins the ceremony with the question: "Nga kylli nga hythen da ka shat ka khun, leng rangbah u briu, dem u Blei? (I ask and seek through the strewing and the oracle, does the man rise and god bow?)" With his other hand he throws a little rice on the forking of the gullet, and because of the convulsive twitching actually one part or the other does rise. If the "man" rises, it is a good sign since the opposite branching, the "god" then bows or stays still as a sign of agreement.

If the omens are unfavorable, then it must be determined by throwing /perhaps a misprint -- Einwerfen instead of Eierwerfen - egg throwing, tr./, why the god is angry and which sacrifice would be pleasing to him. Then the sacrifice begins again until the omens show that the god is reconciled and propitiated.

Let us return to our Nongkrem Puja. After the observing of the

entrails of the hens is completed with good results, the main part of the ceremony begins. Goats are brought out of the inside of the iing sâd and one is placed behind each of the sacrificers. This moment is captured in Fig. 1. The hens that have already been sacrificed and the other sacrificial objects that have been mentioned can be seen lying in front of the Soh Blei and the other sacrificial priests on the ground. The Soh Blei now takes a long knife (ka wait) between both flat outstretched hands and squatting speaks a prayer with bowed head. Fig. 3 shows various kinds of such knives; the smaller folding ones are the ones mentioned above in describing the killing of the hens.

Meanwhile a kind of looping plant is thrown around the neck of one of the goats; one the the people present pulls it into the middle of the place where it /facing p. 898. Fig. 8. Dance of the Khasi Girls in front of the iing sâd. Two photographs by P. Frum. Stegmiller, S. D. S. Fig. 9. Women Khasi Dancers. Two photographs by P. Frum. Stegmiller, S. D. S. / /900/ is held fast by a rope. The Soh Blei gets up, walks up to the animal with the ka wait in his hand and waits for the instant when it holds still. With one blow the head lies on the ground. It is at once picked up and placed beside the gourd bottle standing on the little pile of earth. The twitching rump is dragged in front of the iing sâd. Thus it continues until five goats are beheaded.

Now the S'iem comes down to the sacrificial place. He takes the slaughtering knife in his hand, squats down in the place of the head priest, and observes as the latter had done the same ceremonies. Then he gets up and strides into the middle of the place in full costume with raised head and a self-conscious dignity. A goat has already been lead out there. One blow and its head also rolls on the ground. He sacrifices the first goat to the divinity which made him king; afterwards the four others are sacrificed to the u Blei Shillong. A salvo of guns and a loud shout of joy accompanies each blow of the S'iem.

The slaughter is now continued by others in endless turns. Sixty, eighty and more goats must lose their lives. The poor victims are not always lucky enough to be killed with one blow. The animal might move at the last minute or an unskilled hand may lack a certain firmness. Then the goat is only lightly wounded and crying seeks to escape. The sacrificer throws the knife away in order to disappear hastily among the spectators; some pick up earth and throw it at him with reproachful cries, while others seize the poor animal, throw it on the ground and saw the head off with the knife. That is a horrible sight. It is considered an unfavorable sign when the goat is not

796 beheaded with one blow. If it happens to one of the first twelve goats,
782 the man concerned must inquire through new sacrifices why his sacri-
787 fice was not pleasing to god.

The observing of the entrails is only done with the twelve first goats decapitated by the S'iem and the sacrificial priest. As in the case of pigs, it is only observed whether the liver, lungs, spleen and gall bladder are healthy and without spots, in which case the sacrifice is a good one and pleasing to god, otherwise through throwing /sir: could be egg throwing = Eierwerfen/ and new sacrifices a more favorable result must be brought about.

During the night a pig is sacrificed to the honor of the u Suidnia long S'iem and he is informed thereby that Puja has now taken place and that it will take place once annually to the honor of the u Blei Shillong so that the kings will be lucky and healthy, the markets will enjoy progress and good results, and the children of the kingdom will be happy. This closes with the address to the Suidnia long S'iem: "Bring it about that the augury turns out well, and if the god Shillong should still not be satisfied, then reveal it to us through the augury."

The Soh Blei now takes a chicken in his hand, sprinkles it with water, rice, flour of kpu and ryni and speaks: "Now thou art sprinkled in order to lose thy life by having thy neck cut so that I can see the good or the evil (La pynsum pyndeh ban duh ka myniem ban dyhut u ryndang: ba ngan khmih ia ka bha ka miw)." Then /Wi/ the animal's neck is cut, the blood, as mentioned above, is allowed to drip on the leaves and the gourd bottle, and the entrails are taken out. After the augury has turned out favorably, a white he-goat is brought in and the Soh Blei speaks: "O god Shillong, this prayer is for thee, this sacrifice of the goat, of the hen, of the kpu and ryni, of the utensils of preparation are for thee which thou hast given the royal family so that once annually the Puja may be celebrated in thy name, so that we may live happily, be healthy and increase, so that kings will arise so that their honor and that of the kingdom will grow and increase and the children of the kingdom will spread out to increase thy name and thy honor. O god Shillong, when thou hast received the sacrifice, bring it about that the heart, the lungs, the spleen, the gall bladder and the other parts are good."

Meanwhile dancers are arranged on both sides, they swing the sword (ka wait) and the bunch (a rymphiah) around in the air and utter shouts of joy. As mentioned above, the goat is now shown three times with the various sacrificial gifts, and guns are shot off three times and shouts of joy uttered. Then the S'iem gets up, takes the ka wait in his hand and sits down on the place of sacrifice. He takes

S. Barkan-II 98-6.5 (no date) 1989 [illegible]

off his turban (ka jaia epang) and thanks god three times in a quiet voice, then he hands over the ka wain to the 5th Bisi who does the same and then gives the knife to the sacrificer from the just Nongkrem, this one hands it on to the one from the just [illegible], and this one finally gives it to the one from the just Nongpoeng. Only one from these three families may undertake the beheading. When this has taken place, the head is placed on the leaves in front of the gourd bottle, and the entrails are taken from the body in order to read the omens. If these come out right, the dance of joy is set in motion, all members of the kingdom are invited to the feast, which consists of rice, sacrificial meat, and rice liquor and which lasts until early in the morning.

III. The Celebration that Follows.

On the morning of the following day -- called ninai Wanlang -- a special meeting of the council takes place, which is called Darbar Ha in order to announce that all the sacrifices are now past. The S'iem has mats spread out inside the house and in the front room for the people to sit on; he himself takes his place on a palong, a raised seat, in the front room. Betel nut and pork is distributed to all those present, while the person who is designated as the speaker in the Darbar and the five of the Elders pi yiem receive betel nuts. The S'iem sends to the village and has it announced three times that as long as the Darbar lasts nobody may leave his hut.

Then he takes his turban off, raises both hands and offers thanks in the name of the lord and creator (ka ka kynnang o trai o nongthaw), who made him king, gave him subjects as well as the districts of the kingdom, the markets and the roads leading thither and prays that he will ever give strength, growth and progress and prosperity to the fields. Then he cries /Ri:/ out: "O god, lord and creator, give me, the S'iem, happiness and prosperity also, so that my thanks and submission to thee may become ever greater (Ah Bisi, trai kynnad o nongthaw o nongbuh to ai kha ai ooi ia nga I S'iem ban nongkhraw ka ngith ka dang)." Then he steps back.

The one who has been made the speaker now follows from the just Kynjah. He thanks the S'iem three times and then says: "O lord, thou who has created heaven and earth, thou hast named the king that we may be children of his kingdom; thou hast given the sun and the moon for reckoning the year, so that we can have Puja once in every year, so that the king appears, the children of the valleys increase and thrive, the children of the Khasi (?), the children of the

Fig. 1. At the Oracle of Egg Throwing.

Fig. 2. Khasi Girls and Men in Festive Dance Clothing.

R. Gordon G-3 (no date) 1914 AR? Khasi AR?

524 When the body has been burnt, the ashes and the unburnt bones are collected by the relatives of the deceased and washed. They are then placed in a fish (*ka phong*) which is taken to a stone repository for the bones (*mawbhieng*); here a further sacrifice takes place. For three days after the burning, the maternal relatives frequent the *mawbhieng*, where they offer articles of food for the spirit of the departed to eat, and then three eggs are broken (called *shat long kot ia*) in order to ascertain what is the cause of death. Until this egg-breaking has taken place the family is taboo. The ashes and the unburnt bones are subsequently removed from the *mawbhieng*, and are placed in the family *mawshun*, or *mawlah*. On this occasion a special ceremony takes place.

• 787 9. *Divination by breaking eggs.*—As this is a very peculiar custom, it deserves some description. Gladwell describes it as follows:—

[524] "Each case of sickness or other calamity is ascribed to the influence of some evil spirit, and the first step is to ascertain what particular spirit has been at work, and for this the great institution of egg-casting is brought into play. An expert (not a professional) who does, before a begah, in the centre of which he places an egg on a few grains of rice, after invoking the egg to speak the truth, he smears the rice all the board, excepting one grain left on any spot fancy dictates. Then naming a particular spirit, he asks that if he be the cause of evil, a part of the shell of the egg may be deposited near the grain of rice, he then strikes the egg sharply on the centre of the board. This process is repeated, if necessary, till the required information is obtained. The next thing is to discover what sort of offering will be acceptable to the spirit. This is ascertained in a precisely similar way, but the desired result is often not arrived at till most rice and many eggs have been expended.

I have personally witnessed this egg-breaking and can vouch for the correctness of Mr. Gladwell's description. The Khasis do nothing of what they consider to be of the least importance without breaking eggs. When a Khasi builds a new house, or before he proceeds on a journey, he always breaks eggs to see whether the building or the journey will be lucky or not. I have quoted the description of egg-breaking at length, as I am informed that there is some similar custom extant in the Arrakan Hill Tracts. I hope that it will be possible to ascertain whether or not there is any similar custom in Burma.

524 11. *Khasi archery.*—Archery is a regular institution amongst the Khasis, who are very fond of it. Archery may be described as the Khasi national game. There are regular archery contests between the people of different villages, one village challenging another to shoot off a match. Certain conditions are fixed, such as the date and place of the match, the number of arrows to be shot by the archers, the distinguishing marks to be given to arrows of the two different sides, etc.,

over what their ancestors are doing for them, and what the views and inclinations may be as regards the amount of aid they may give. To a Khasia there is no difficulty about the matter when in distress or requiring aid of any kind, making omens by the breaking of eggs (which I will hereafter describe) he appeals to and propitiates any one ancestor he may select; only one or two may promise such protection, and these it may so happen have died years ago. The benefit also conferred may be very trivial, and sufficiently acknowledged by the setting up of stones of small size; on the contrary, if great favours are conferred, as the wealthy we find large monoliths forming conspicuous landmarks on many a hill-top, scattered over a large area of country, and which are mostly known to the country round by the names of the individuals who have wrought so much good in their affairs.

These stones are never erected in pairs or in even numbers; counting over a very large series still perfect, I found them invariably in sets of three, five, seven, or as I have before mentioned in the case of the Nongturiang clan, in two sets, five and five, on opposite sides, to the same individual.* Even numbers are considered unfinished or imperfect.

A reference to the plans given, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, will show the various arrangements in which the stones are set up, being in a segment of a circle and at right angles to each other, as in fig. 3. The most common form, however, is in line, fig. 4. Fig. 1 consisted of a circular platform raised about two feet, faced with rough stones on the front face. These three examples were observed on the hill of Laiong-kote, where the name is held; and I have not seen anywhere else the monoliths so arranged as in other parts of the country they are invariably set up in a straight row.

These monuments are also erected for such a reason as the following:—During the illness of a person, every kind of propitiation and exorcism either by the breaking of eggs, sacrificing fowls, pigs, etc., and by the examination of the liver and viscera having been made, and then failing to restore him; the sick man may vow that should he recover, he will erect a set of stones to one of his ancestors, who, it is presumed, on knowing of the intention, will do his best to save him.

In setting up these slabs all members of the community are under an obligation to assist on such an occasion, and are not paid for their labour, beyond receiving in the evening a little food or liquor at the dwelling of the family who have sought their aid. The skilled workmen employed on the stone-cutting are

* These and five are the most frequent numbers met with, also very rarely I have seen eleven.

evil spirits, who I suppose they think may be hovering about the neighbourhood. Here we find a custom the counterpart of one in Burmah, where the body of a Buddhist priest of rank is embalmed in honey, and laid in state for a long period, to be afterwards blown up with powder, together with the costly house that bears him to the place. The same custom we find in "Crawfurd's Embassy to Siam," exists in that country.

There is some slight analogy to be traced between the funeral customs of the Khasis and Singphos, particularly in the collection of the ashes and subsequent interment. (Appendix D)

The breaking of eggs is perhaps of all modes of seeking for an omen the most curious of all the Khasi customs, but it is by no means confined to these hill people. I am informed by Colonel M'Culloch that the Kukis and some other of the numerous Hill tribes around the Munipûr Valley do the same; but then it is not so commonly practised, and I never myself saw them engaged at the rite. The Gâros use eggs only for sacrifice. The number broken appears unlimited, but about twenty is a common number. It depends, of course, on the means of the individuals. They use a small board about twelve inches by eight inches square, which has a projecting kind of handle with a hollow to receive the egg to be used. The position of the chips on this board indicates the luck or answers to the inquiry that is sought, and only those pieces that fall within the board, outside of the egg-shell upwards, count as signs. The egg is prescribed and addressed after this manner: Egg! I am only a man, an ignorant and un divine nothing; you can communicate with spirits, and between man and them have intercourse. Now, say! who has done this? (in case of sickness)—who has caused this man to fall sick? If the spirit is in the house, let the signs be on the left; if out of the house, on the right. The exorcist spits on the egg, and taking some clay in his hand, smears it over, so that the outside may be distinctly seen where it is smashed. Apology is made to the egg saying: I do not spit on you to insult you, but to clean you and give you a colour. Then standing up he throws the egg down with all his force upon the board.

It would appear that only those pieces of egg-shell that fall to the right afford an element of consequence in the matter; those that fall beyond or on the off-side of where the egg strikes are the representatives of spirits that are not implicated with the matter in hand, while those that lie on the near side show that the sickness is the result of purely natural causes, over-eating, drinking, or exposure to heat and cold, and not through the agency of any malignant spirit; such signs are of good import, and indicate (taking a case of sickness) that the person is likely to recover. Should he not do so the egg or rather the exorcist, a professional sacrificer called "Ka Bong Kmie", or "Ka Bong Kmie Kmiê",

holds his own, he can only: What was the good of calling me 787
in, to cook eggs from eggs, when the case was past hope? I
could only give you such, and say he was sure to recover.—As
might be expected, the sacrificers prey on the ignorance and
superstitions of the people; and it not unfrequently happens, I
am told, that on one being called in, and after examining a number
of eggs, he declares that owing to previous communion with
spirits in other houses, he can do nothing, and recommends that
another exorcist be called in, to kill a pig or a fowl, and thus
those who can afford it are made to give up as much as can be
squeezed out of them.

Any member of the community, if he desires it, can learn the
forms of offering, sacrifice, etc., under the instruction of those
who are in the profession, and who can thus examine and look
to their due and proper performance. When they sacrifice a
cow, goat, or pig, the liver is the principal part examined for
omens; if it is smooth and healthy, such are good. The en-
trails, if full, are a propitious token; the size of the gall-
bladder is another point—if small, poverty may fall on the
family. Demons also are particular; some will not accept a
black or coloured fowl; pure white only will suffice, and these
they object often to sell.

It is often a matter of great difficulty to persuade a Khasia to 788
take medicine, especially men from outlying villages; they quite
dread it, imagining that, should they take it, some spirit, wroth
at not being propitiated, may alter its proportion, and thus make
them much worse. I have seen a grown-up man burst into
tears, and beg that medicine might not be administered, when
he was living seriously ill. They, however, soon find out the
good effects of our treatment, especially that of quinine in fever,
and they laugh in turn at the scruples of their more ignorant
companions.

The Jaintias, or more properly the Sintengs, on the East, are, 789
I think, more under the influence of their exorcists than are the 790.
Khasis, on the West. On certain occasions, individuals sacrifice
a number of animals to different demons, and a great feast is
held, to which numbers are invited; men, women, and children,
are then arranged in large circles, each with a leaf for a plate
before them, on which the meat, when dressed, is served.

There is, however, one very extraordinary custom—one, I am 791
glad to say, confined to only a few villages in the Jaintia coun-
try—called "Tawee". The unfortunate individual who is pre-
sumed to be in league with a demon, in order to clear his character and be again admitted into the society of his kindred, must throw everything he possesses away, even to the clothes on his back, and begin life anew. A man on whom such an accusa-

19: McCormack B-4, 9 (1954-1958) 1954
[P. III B] AR? Khasi AR?

[illegible] 776
[illegible] 971
[illegible] 987*
[illegible] 988
[illegible] 989
[illegible] 781
[illegible] 783
[illegible] 769
[illegible] 774
[illegible] [P+]
[illegible] 991
[illegible] 992

I.P. Banerjee E-5 (1955) 1966 AR? Khasi AR?
Smith

THE KHASI FESTIVAL OF 'POMBLANG'

S. Banerjee

Introduction

The Khasi inhabit the upland of the central part of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam. They reckon descent through mother and the youngest daughter (Ka Khadduh) of the house is the custodian of the ancestral property. Belief in the existence of spirits is strong among them and the cause of diseases are ascertained by taking recourse to the process of divination. They are ruled by different categories of Chiefs. The Siem is the highest official responsible for the administration of the state but a few small states are also governed by Sirdars with some powers as vested in the former although they do not possess the same status. It is interesting to note that their principal whose rank is next to Siem, have also been allotted to perform the secular duties in some of the regions of the Khasi country. The Chief function through their respective council comprising elected members from different administrative units. He is under subservience to the body so he is liable to be removed or even dismissed, if his activities are not in conformity with the Khasi traditional usage. Most of his directives are implemented through the assistance of his subordinates who are in-charge of various sections of the State. The Khasi place his grievances first to these junior officers for redress and justice, after which an appeal can be preferred to the Siem or any other higher officer as the case may be. One of the eminent States of the Khasi people known as Khyriem, where this festival is celebrated, consists of eight units for administrative convenience under the supervision of different grades of officials who participated in this celebration along with the Raja or representative of the people.

The Khasi festival of *Pomblang* (Goat killing) described below used to be celebrated at one time in Shillong when the Khasi units of Khyriem and Mylliem were not separated. The first chief of the Khyriem state U Singh Mawlai shifted his headquarters to Nongkrem village after partition of the kingdom, which occurred before the arrival of the British. He again moved to Lumbathen after a brief stay at the village of Lyngkyrim. He performed this festival as long as he was there, transferring it once to Nongkrem where he re-settled again. It was celebrated here for a long time and consequently it was named after this village. Although the ruling family had been shifted by residence about sixty years ago to the present village Iaid, during the time of U Kiar Singh Siem, it is performed regularly at Nongkrem dance which was observed by the author from 21st June to 25th June, 1955.

Origin of the festival

It is being told every year about the days of U Shillong who was reckoned to be the founder of original Khyriem State. They celebrate it to perpetuate his memory and pay homage with a view to secure rain, good harvest, eliminating diseases and famine. He was worshipped along with other ancestors with view to guide the present Chief in the discharge of his duties and for the welfare of the people.

The house of Siem (Ing-suit) where the rites are observed, is considered sacred. It consists of a big hall (Jitlet) in the centre, surrounded by rooms. One of them on the north is used as a kitchen room (Ing-shanjar) where ritual